

CHAPTER 19

OVERVIEW OF A U.S. MISSION

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DIPLOMATIC READINESS

The Human Resources strategy of “diplomatic readiness” seeks to establish the Department of State’s ability to get “the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills.” Three major administrative functions make up what is called the “diplomatic readiness platform”: Human Resources and Training, Information Management, and Infrastructure and Operations. In other words, “diplomatic readiness” is the people, the equipment, the money, and the buildings that allow the mission to conduct its diplomatic activities. See <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/13742.pdf>.

The following diplomatic activities are used to implement the diplomatic readiness platform: reporting and analysis, meetings and negotiations, public affairs and public diplomacy, consular affairs, representation, and assistance to Americans and citizens of other countries. Through diplomatic readiness and the resulting diplomatic activities, the United States achieves its foreign policy goals.

THE ORGANIZATION

A U.S. mission exists in order to manage American diplomatic and consular activities within a country. A mission includes people from the U.S. Department of State and other U.S. Government departments and agencies. The U.S. mission in a foreign country is classified as an embassy if the permanent chief of mission has the rank of ambassador. The following are part of a U.S. mission: an embassy, embassy offices and other offices reporting to the ambassador, and consulates general and consulates. In a few countries, the United States has what are called “multilateral missions,” which are additional special missions to international organizations such as NATO or the United Nations. There are about 300 U.S. embassies, U.S. consulates general, consulates, and special missions maintained by the United States around the world.

The U.S. embassy is the basic unit for conducting U.S. diplomacy overseas. Its chief of mission is the personal representative of the President and reports to and receives instructions through the Secretary of State. The chief of mission has the responsibility to direct all U.S. programs and personnel (except personnel under the command of a U.S. area military commander, personnel under the authority of another U.S. diplomatic post, and U.S. personnel detailed to an international organization). The chief of mission thus carries ultimate responsibility for U.S. representation to the host country, represents U.S. policy to the host government, and coordinates and integrates the activities of U.S. personnel accredited to the host country.

THE STAFF

At an embassy or special mission, upon the ambassador’s absence the person who acts in the ambassador’s place is called the chargé or chargé d’affaires. At consulates and consulates general, the consul or consul general, also known as the principal officer, is in charge but reports to the ambassador at the embassy. The deputy chief of mission (DCM) is the second most senior person in the mission. The DCM has primary responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the mission and coordination between the various agencies at post.

Ambassadors manage the work of a mission through the country team. The country team is comprised of the heads of each State Department section (see below) and the heads of all other agencies. The country team meets regularly to discuss local conditions and mission activities, review management and security issues, coordinate programs, and plan and evaluate progress on meeting the goals of the mission.

The number of persons assigned to an embassy usually depends on the size of the foreign country and depth and breadth of U.S. bilateral relations with that country. Besides the head(s) of the mission, staff includes other Foreign Service officers and personnel from the four foreign affairs agencies: the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Agriculture. By far the largest group of employees, however, is locally employed staff, often known as Foreign Service nationals (FSNs). U.S. embassies also employ, on a regular and part-time basis, other U.S. citizens (including family members of foreign affairs agency employees) or citizens of another country, known as third country nationals (TCNs)

THE STATE DEPARTMENT AT A U.S. MISSION

The State Department is the lead agency for the conduct of U.S. diplomacy and is comparable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in many other countries. Every mission includes at least one American from the State Department.

Administrative Section

The administrative section provides the support that allows the other sections and agencies to do their jobs. Administrative issues regard human resources, financial management, and information management (radio, mail, telephone, computer, and diplomatic pouches), general services (buildings, maintenance, purchasing, supply, customs and shipping, and transportation), health and medical issues, and community issues. (The person responsible for community issues is called the Community Liaison Office coordinator or CLO.)

Consular Section

The consular section provides services and assistance to American citizens living in or visiting the country. It also issues visas to citizens of other countries who seek entry to the United States for work, travel, business, or immigration purposes. Consular services include issuing and renewing passports, registering births and deaths of U.S. citizens, registering Americans who are in the country, emergency assistance in case of arrests, deaths, or natural disasters, U.S. voting and tax information, and social security and other benefits.

Political and Economic Sections

The political and economic sections analyze political, social, and economic developments within the host country and region. These sections report the results of their findings to the State Department in Washington, D.C. Employees working in these sections meet with foreign government officials to promote U.S. interests, meet with political parties and non-governmental organizations, and make recommendations on foreign policy.

Public Affairs Section

The public affairs section provides the ambassador and other principal officers with advice on public affairs and public diplomacy activities. Employees in this section administer cultural and educational exchange programs, manage information research centers, and serve as official contacts with the media. All inquiries from the news media must be referred to the public affairs section. Other employees are not allowed to speak to the press in their role as employees of the United States Government.

Security Section

The security section develops and maintains systems to provide a safe, secure workplace for everyone at the mission—and safe, secure homes for American staff and family members. This section provides services such as access controls such as guards, security for visiting dignitaries, and security information to American businesses situated in the country. The section may include a Marine security guard detachment to protect classified information.

